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THE WAR: ITS CAUSE AND CURE.

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S P E E C H

OF

HON. WILLIAM M. DAVIS, OF PENN.,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 1862.

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# THE WAR: ITS CAUSE AND CURE.

## SPEECH

OF

# HON. WILLIAM M. DAVIS, OF PA.,

DELIVERED

In the House of Representatives, March 6, 1862.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. DAVIS said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: If I am not misinformed, one portion of the President's message has not been referred to any committee; whether on the ground that there was no appropriate standing committee, I cannot say. I allude to the portion of the message which treats of labor and its relations to capital. It may be appropriate to refer it to the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and to this point I propose to speak.

In the records of man's history, the bloodiest page is that on which is recorded the efforts of the privileged few to reduce the masses to their control, and the resistance of the divided people to such subjugation. They first desired to enslave labor, that they might enjoy its fruits; the latter desired to dispose of their own labor, and to partake of its products. By the usurper honest labor has been held in low esteem, for they grew mighty on the sweat of others' brows. They strode haughtily over the poor and lowly, and declared that slavery was the proper condition of labor.

In this class we find the emperors, kings, and nobles of the world, with the large unitary body of slave-owners in this country. Opposed to these are the bearers of burdens, the laborers, bond and free, the producers and the tax-payers of the earth.

The page of history which we are this day writing is but a continuation of the sanguinary record. The past of this record has been ably reviewed by others; I will deal with the present and future of this grand drama, in which freedom and slavery stand in armed opposition. As parties in this contest there are three actors: two in the interest of slavery, united in their adoration of it, and agreeing in their contempt of free institutions, only disagreeing as to the best means of perpetuating the system. One, "hating everything with the prefix of free, from free negroes down or up through the whole catalogue, free farms, free labor, free society, free will, free thinking, and free schools, as all belonging to the same damnable class of isms," has rebelled against the Government, and is now in arms against its rightful authority. The second is embraced in that which is known as the border-State interest, which is willing to remain in the Union and give loyalty and service to the Government on conditions as set forth in the following pronunciamiento:

"If we remain in the Union, we must demand a repeal of every unconstitutional act against the institution of slavery. We must demand that it shall be a settled policy of this Government that wherever slavery shall exist under the flag of the Union, it shall receive full and adequate protection from the Federal Government."

These men sustain the Constitution and the Union, believing that slavery will be more secure under such protection. They deprecate the conflict of arms, and hug the cheat of neutrality lest slavery may come to harm in the hurly-burly of mad war.

There is another class—nondescripts, leaders of the late Democratic party of the North, hungry expectants at the table of slavery, and disappointed officials; not numerous enough to form a distinct element in the contest, they are strongly inclined to mischief; and as they recover from the odium incurred by the late Democratic administration, and the open rebellion of the Southern wing of that party, they may serve a purpose in distracting the North by clamoring for reconstruction on the old basis, and for confining the war strictly to *old* issues. Opposed to all of these, stand free institutions, the spirit of the age, and the laborers of the world.

To the careful attention of the *laborers* of my country, North and South, I would commend these earnest words from the President's annual message:

"It continues to develop that the insurrection is largely, if not exclusively, a war upon the first principle of popular government—the rights of the people. Conclusive evidence of this is found in the most grave and maturely-considered public documents, as well as in the general tone of the insurgents. In those documents we find the abridgement of the existing right of suffrage, and the denial to the people of all right to participate in the selection of public officers, except the legislative, boldly advocated, with labored arguments to prove that large control of



the people in government is the source of all political evil. Monarchy itself is sometimes hinted at as a possible refuge from the power of the people.

"In my present position, I could scarcely be justified were I to omit raising a warning voice against this approach of returning despotism." \* \* \* \* \*

"A few men own capital, and that few avoid labor themselves, and, with their capital, hire or buy another few to labor for them. A large majority belong to neither class—neither work for others, nor have others working for them. In most of the Southern States a majority of the whole people of all colors are neither slaves nor masters; while in the Northern, a large majority are neither hirers nor hired. Men with their families—wives, sons, and daughters—work for themselves on their farms, in their houses, and in their shops, taking the whole product to themselves, and asking no favors of capital on the one hand, nor of hired laborers or slaves on the other. It is not forgotten that a considerable number of persons mingle their own labor with capital—that is, they labor with their own hands, and also buy or hire others to labor for them; but this is only a mixed, and not a distinct class. No principle stated is disturbed by the existence of this mixed class.

"Again: as has already been said, there is not, of necessity, any such thing as the free hired laborer being fixed to that condition for life. Many independent men everywhere in these States, a few years back in their lives, were hired laborers. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just, and generous, and prosperous system, which opens the way to all—gives hope to all, and consequent energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all. No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty—none less inclined to take, or touch, aught which they have not honestly earned. Let them beware of surrendering a political power which they already possess, and which, if surrendered, will surely be used to close the door of advancement against such as they, and to fix new disabilities and burdens upon them, till all of liberty shall be lost."

These words are full of meaning, clearly pointing to the *objects* of the war, on the one part, and the danger to the laborer if slavery should succeed in its nefarious intent, upon the other, and closing with words of solemn warning against any surrender of rights which they already possess. As one of the class contemplated in this message, as one who has *always* labored for his *bread*, and is, in *all* respects, identified in thought, feeling, and *hopes* with those who must eat their bread in the sweat of their face, I will speak of the *war, its cause, and its cure*.

Men learned in the law have already spoken to this question with instruction to the public mind; and others, with semblance of learning, have darkened counsel by words without knowledge, to the confusion of the people. I will not multiply words to verify the truth as contained in the teachings of Marshall, Hamilton, Madison, and Adams, and as set forth in the able argument of my honorable friend from Ohio, [Mr. BINGHAM.] Accepting them, I am content that *we have all necessary, legal, and constitutional powers and rights to deal, as seemeth best for the Republic, with the cause of the war.*

"It has been by a simple rule of interpretation I have studied the Constitution of my country. That rule has been simply this: that by no word, no act, no combination into which I might enter, should any one human being of all the generations to which I belong, much less any class of human beings of any nation, race, or kindred, be oppressed and kept down in the least degree in their efforts to rise to a higher state of liberty and happiness. Amid all the glosses of the times, amid all the essays and discussions to which the Constitution of the United States has been subjected, this has been the simple, plain, broad light in which I have read every article and every section of that great instrument. Whenever it requires of me that this hand shall keep down the humblest of the human race, then I will lay down power, place, position, fame, everything rather than adopt such a construction or such a rule. If, therefore, in this land there are any who would rise, I say to them, in God's name, good speed."

Mr. Seward has said many things that future ages will gladly remember; but in all the records of eloquence, whether of his or other men's, it would be difficult to find a loftier passage than this. Would that I could persuade myself that such was still his creed and practice.

As a representative of labor, I shall speak for the laborers of the whole country, however diverse they may be in color, be they bond or free, whether it be to advocate the interests of American labor, as opposed to the capital and machinery of foreign countries, whether it be to resent the slur and the sneer so often cast upon the laborer by those who lack appreciation of his true dignity, or whether it be to save the blood and lives of the Northern laborer in this war, by doing right and justly by the slave. I will now and always speak my honest convictions, with no shadow of reverence for those precedents, compromises, or usages which have culminated in violence and rebellion; and without apology of argument I will assert that "the present rebellion finds its root and nourishment in chattel slavery in the South; that the leading conspirators are slaveholders, who form an oligarchy hostile to free institutions;" and as, in the nature of things, no solid peace can be maintained while the cause of this war is permitted to exist, therefore I am in favor of such action by Congress, the Executive, the armies, and navies, as will lead to the final extinction of the *cause, leaving the terms of said extinction to the time when we may be called upon to act on it*. I am utterly opposed to any recognition of the right of any rebel master to any claim on the services of any person.

When gentlemen from the South announce themselves as slaveholders—and they lose no occasion to proclaim it—as the very title of their "greatness and nobility," a thrill of admiration vibrates through the opposite side of the Chamber, and their eternal song of the "nigger" is listened to with that deferential consideration *always* due this privileged order. And though they may emulate "Bunsby" in the profundity of their reasoning as to the



fate and condition of the ship of State, the "Captain Cuttles," who may be found every where, wag their wise heads over "an opinion as is an opinion," and commend these "chunks of wisdom" to us poor Republicans. You slaveholders claim of us respectful consideration, because a poor score or more of men and women are the bond creatures of your will and obey your beck and bidding. Your pretensions to superiority on such poor grounds are disregarded and laughed at by the *free* men and skilled working men of the North. Your assumptions can only be as nothing in the minds of men of skilled hand and trained intellect, who, as inventors, wrestle, as Jacob did of old, with the angels of the Lord, and refuse to let them go until they bless them with good gifts from the master's garner of invention. Your *dominion* seems poor to whole armies intent on the conquest of nature's forces to man's use and benefit. And your order is not recognised by men who have grown in a world and aspire to be nobles in a kingdom wherein, by the touch of the little finger, the force and power and efficiency of ten thousand of your poor servitors spring into being, attended by no groan of anguish from overtaken nerves, needing no lash to urge, no fugitive bill to reclaim to unwilling bondage. I, too, have been a slaveholder; for years I have driven a grim, black giant, born of the dust of the earth, and fashioned in the womb of the furnace "seven times heated," with iron frame and thews of steel, asking no kindness at my hands, save to wipe his oiled visage, and to lubricate his joints—he would toil on two and twenty hours in every day, the year through.

This slave is the steam engine, the wonder of the age, the crowning triumph of man's mechanical skill. We have but to touch the secrets of its being, and a power almost omnipotent, and seemingly eternal in its endurance, awaits our direction, to overcome every obstacle to our will, to execute all designs of our brain.

In this creation we behold the embodiment of more of human thought, effort, and self-sacrifice, more of sublime triumph and deep despair of attainment, than culminated at Marathon, Waterloo, or the proudest and bloodiest of earth's battle-fields. After knowing such dominion, and exercising such mastery over the machinery of power, and *knowing* the development that attends it, I would emancipate all human labor from forced subjection to another's will: educate *all* men to a full development of their intelligence and skill; and open unobstructed way to every people, that the race may achieve supremest mastery over the material world and the forces of nature. And as man's developed will transcended his physical power to execute, I would give each laborer, not a human, but an iron slave.

In answer, you will say, "we also have the engine and machinery as aid and ally to our well-ordered, safe, and permanent system of labor." I know you have admitted machinery within your realm; but you have always feared it as the missionary of freedom; for the free-thoughted, out-spoken mechanic, the engineer, the smith, and the machinist, the whole army of workers in iron and brass, in stone and in wood, follow close in its train.

These men will assert the dignity of labor, and their equality with you, by making terms and conditions with you; they will stand your equals as men, your superiors in the skill and knowledge of their trade, and will give you equivalent service for your gold. You know that slavery cannot live in the face of such men. They bring with them the fundamental idea of the North, "that the laborer is worthy of his hire;" that the first debt to be paid is the wages of the working man; and that to defraud the laborer of his hire is the depth of meanness. In the South it is considered honorable to compel the laborer to work without pay. This constitutes the essential difference between the North and the South—the meanness of the one is the honor of the other; how will you reconcile them? And these practical men of exact works and close figures will reason with you, slaveholders, in this wise: you give \$1,000 for a slave and place him at one end of a saw, and another \$1,000 for his mate at the other end, and you get scant supply of lumber for your houses or ships. I will give \$1,000 for a ten-horse-power engine, equal to the power of one hundred and fifty men, and attach it to a saw, and supply you with lumber so cheap that you must discard the saw, and turn your slaves to other employment. Or you put your slave to the hand-mill, and he grinds a scant supply of coarse meal for your family use; but the millwright marks the brawling brook that from creation's dawn has run its wild course free and unobstructed from the mountain to the sea; he takes the stones that block your roads, and the boulders that mar the beauty of your pastures, and he forms a reservoir of gratuitous power in the mill-dam; he fashions the mill, and shapes the water-wheel and simple machinery from the crowded trees of the forest; from material hitherto waste he evolves a power of a thousand hands, and directs it to the preparation of the corn and wheat—in consequence a thousand slaves are liberated from the toil of the mill, and a thousand hand-mills are consigned to the rubbish heap. The plough and cultivator banish the clumsy hoe, and substitute the horse or mule for many slaves; thus, by improved

machinery and processes, lessening your dependence on the rude labor of the slave, and dispensing with the awkward tools with which the past was content. Every improvement, whether the erection of the mill or the introduction of the steam engine, frees or removes your bondmen. In this peaceful process of emancipation we see the hand-saw giving way to the reciprocating mill-saw, and this, in turn, displaced by the circular saw. The old planter's mill banished by the water or steam-mill; the spinning-wheel and hand-loom merged and lost in the giant factory; the scythe, the sickle, and the flail in the patent reaper and the thrashing machine.

And yet, sir, so far as I have heard, the unfortunate owners of this *discarded machinery* have never set up a claim on Government for the losses incurred by the introduction of the patented inventions. Had such claim been made, a good and sufficient answer would be: you are more than compensated in the reduced cost of the products of the new machinery. You are paid for your *saw* in the first load of boards you purchase. It is eighty-five years since Adam Smith wrote:

"It appears, accordingly, from the experiences of all ages and nations, that the work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves. It is found to do so even at Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, where the wages of labor are so very high."—*Wealth of Nations*, I, viii.

So wrote Adam Smith; and all intelligent men know that the odds are greatly in favor of anything Adam Smith wrote being true. Do you believe this? My constituents will be apt to say to claimants for compensation for the emancipated slave, "you will be paid in the better man we will give you; if we take your slave we will return you the freed man;" and again, "you will be paid for your saw in the first load of boards you buy." But you say, "we do not desire this." Possibly not; but it has been answered, "*that the Republic may suffer no damage, we do this thing.*" "But I have bought this man. I gave 'thirty pieces of silver' for him, and he is mine; his increase and his services are my possession. Are my thirty pieces to go for nothing? Would you rob me?" Not so. We place you on a level with the owner of the turnpike and the Conestoga team, when the railroad and locomotive were introduced. You suffer only as the owner of all productive machines does when better and cheaper productions displace his; from the "whip-saw," the "hand-mill," and the "spinning-wheel," up to the slave, all are subject to the common law of property in machines; all must yield to the better and cheaper, without thought of compensation for the discarded rubbish. Should my people say this to me, how can I answer them? How can I vote millions to remunerate the owner of the slave, when he is superseded by a better man, and refuse to apply the same rule to the thousand and one bake-ovens that may be displaced and ruined by Burdun's mechanical bakery?

To illustrate the injustice, suppose South Carolina has four hundred thousand slaves, and we allow the moderate sum of \$400 for each slave, this would equal \$160,000,000 in compensation to the owners, and yet the State would contain four hundred thousand more efficient workers than it had before. We are made poorer by the taxes imposed to meet this payment. They are made doubly rich by the gift of millions of dollars and freedom to the slave.

An objection to the policy of confiscation, or the emancipation that may follow it, and one that is used to fright the Northern laborer from meeting the question squarely, to bias his better judgment by appeals to an alarmed self-interest, is embodied in the question asked by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, [Mr. WRIGHT:]

"Where would you march that army of four millions of slaves? Would you march them to Ohio, or to the State of Pennsylvania, or to the State of New York?"

And which he answers in the following supposition:

"But let me say to the gentleman, that if his army of four millions of slaves were to commence their march into Ohio and Pennsylvania, it would be worse upon those States than the plagues of Egypt. They would devour and eat out the substance of the people. *Not only would that evil come to pass, but the effect of it would also be to destroy the blacks themselves and annihilate all their power for good.*"

This is a fearful picture, and one that we might justly shrink from, were it founded in probability, or had anything of fact to sustain it.

I propose to show by the following argument that such inroad is unlikely, and would be contrary to the past history of this people.

By the census of 1850, we find that Maryland had a free black population of 74,000; Delaware of 18,000; Virginia of 54,000; or a total of 136,000 in these three border States. These free blacks are surrounded by the blighting influences and dangers of slavery; subjected to laws, the injustice and cruelty of which are but now coming to light in the practices of this District. In spite of threats of forcible expatriation, or of being sold into bondage; in the face of attempted legislation, thus denounced by Judge Catron, of Tennessee, in opposing a bill for the forcible removal of this unhappy class:



"My objection to the bill is, *that it proposes to commit an outrage, to perpetuate an oppression and cruelty.* This is the plain truth, and it is idle to mince words to soften the fact.

"We are told that this 'free negro bill' is a politic, popular measure. Where is it popular? In what nook or corner of the State are the principles of humanity so deplorably deficient that a majority of the whole inhabitants would commit an outrage not committed in a Christian country of which history gives any account? In what country is it, this side of Africa, that the majority have enslaved the minority, sold the weak to the strong, and applied the proceeds of sale to educate the children of the stronger side, as this bill proposes? It is an open assertion that 'might makes right.' It is re-opening the African slave-trade, in fact. In that trade the strong capture the weak, and sell them; and so it will be here, if this policy is carried out.

"All over the State, those who are responsible for passing the bill will have to contend with fearful public opinion, made up of all the women who have moral characters and religious feelings; backed by the clergy, and assuredly by a very large majority of the members of all the churches, for we must carry along with us the important fact that numbers of the people, sought to be enslaved or driven out, belong to and are members of our various churches, and in full communion. That these great bodies of Christian men and women will quietly stand by and see their humble co-workers sold on the block to the negro-trader is not to be expected; nor will any set of men be supported, morally or politically, who are the authors of such a law."

Yet of the 53,000 free blacks in Pennsylvania, only 15,000 are not native born. Why have this people, with so many reasons to impel them, *not* migrated to the North? Why do they adhere with such persistence to their native soil? This love of home is strikingly illustrated by the following figures from the census of 1850: of the 54,333 free blacks in the State of Virginia, only 533 were born out of the State; of the 18,073 in Delaware, only 1,141; of the 74,723 in Maryland, only 1,367; and of the 27,463 in North Carolina, but 643 were born out of the State; or of a total free population in these four States of 174,000, only 3,686 are foreign born, or a trifle over two per cent. This shows plainly that the black is not migratory, and that our people have little to apprehend from a race thus deep-rooted in the soil of the South. Is it not doing violence to right reason and the facts to assume that the negro would abandon the home he has clung to under such adverse circumstances, with the first step towards rendering his existence tolerable? I am satisfied that gentlemen have allowed their prejudice to cloud their judgment; and when they come to review the facts, they will agree with me that, with emancipation, the exodus of the negro will be southward, and that soon, of all the free blacks resident in the cold North, one-half or more would take up the line of march to the sunny land of Dixie.

"Where the yam will grow, the cotton blow,  
They'll raise the rice and corn;  
And never they'll fear it never they hear  
The driver blow his horn."

Having combatted the apprehension that the comparative feeble African would overrun and root out the developed working man of the free States, I will proceed, in a rapid and hasty sketch, to set forth some of the advantages that may accrue to the Northern laborer by this system of free labor in the South, which may happily follow this war.

The slaves of the South are, of necessity, non-consumers of the products of Northern skill and labor, save to a very limited extent. There are about four million five hundred thousand slaves; these will be converted into consumers of our labor by the introduction of a system that will enable them to gratify their simple tastes, in vying with old master in the consumption of the ten thousand products of our skill. The wages earned by these people, exclusive of board, would at once amount to \$250,000,000, of which it is within reason to suppose one-half, or \$125,000,000, would find its way into the workshops of the North. Why, sir, a single pair of shoes per annum to each of these four-and-a-half millions would cheer the hearts of the sons of St. Crispin in Massachusetts and Philadelphia; a cheap ornamental Yankee clock on each mantle of the eight hundred thousand humble homes which would soon dot the Southern landscape, would almost reconcile Connecticut to freedom; an extra Sunday gown to each woman and child would consume twenty or thirty millions of yards of calicoes; a suit of Sunday best to each man and boy would give \$30,000,000 to Northern industry; the hoe, spade, and axe, needed about the little home, would add other millions. Each want gratified would lead to new desires, to act as stimulants to thrift and industry, and thus fit them to their new estate.

But the South will soon supply these simple wants of her people—granted; and I most ardently desire that she may. Then she will the more need the skill of our mechanics to build her mills and machinery, and the skilled workmen of the North to conduct her enterprise to success. At a future time I may follow this argument into detail, to show to the working man, capitalist, mechanic, manufacturer, and trader of the whole country, the advantages of securing a market of four-and-a-half millions of consumers.

Mr. Chairman, the advocates of slavery are now engaged in the destruction of the Government and the Constitution. They have proclaimed their independence, and have adopted a constitution, the vital idea of which is the enslavement of labor, the subordination of the rights of man to the power of capital, or, in the fulfillment of the avowal of Governor H. V. Johnson, "that capital should own labor and the laborer." With this un-



holy purpose at heart, they have levied armies and waged war on the land. They have fitted and authorized privateers to ravage the seas. By appeals to the avarice of the foreign trader, and temptations to European lust of dominion, they seek to involve us in a foreign war, and thus secure the disruption of the Union. They have inaugurated a reign of terror over the Union-loving citizens of the South. They have driven them from their homes, and have confiscated their lands and chattles and all properties. They have declared all residents of the loyal States aliens, and have sequestered their property as such. In violation of common honesty they have repudiated their private debts. They have introduced anarchy, misrule, violence, and bloody war within our borders, and made popular government a jeer and a by-word in the mouth of the stranger. As deadly enemies they beleaguer the capital. We legislate within sound of their cannon, and the honored seat which you occupy, Mr. Chairman, is barely beyond their rifle shot. The young men whom the nation has intrusted to our keeping lie in graves dug by an enemy's hands. The west wind is yet tainted with the blood of the battle-field. The Potomac is closed by the leaguers, and three hundred thousand lives are now the rampart between our homes and the myrmidons of slavery.

In this state of affairs I feel released from all past obligations, and am free to regard slavery as the cancerous spot on the vitals of the body-politic—to be treated with knife and cautery, actual and potential. "For if we meet this dreadful and portentous evil with poor common-place proceedings, with trivial maxims and paltry old saws, with doubts, fears, and misgivings, down we go to the bottom of the abyss, and nothing short of Omnipotence can save us." Yet, sir, gentlemen on the Democratic side of the House and the pro-slavery side of this question, insist, *on this floor*, in State legislatures, in public discussion, through the press, by correspondence, and in conversation, at all times, in all places, in season and out of season, sentiments and views of policy as expressed in the following preamble to resolutions of the Legislature of Maryland, January 2, 1861:

"The General Assembly of Maryland have seen with concern certain indications at the seat of the General Government of an interference with the institution of slavery in the slaveholding States, and cannot hesitate to express their sentiments and those of the people they represent in regard to a policy so unwise and mischievous. This war is prosecuted by the nation with but one object, that, namely, of a restoration of the Union *just as it was* when the rebellion broke out. The rebellious States are to be brought back to their places in the Union without change or diminution of their constitutional rights. In the language of the resolution adopted by both Houses of Congress at its extra session in July last with remarkable unanimity, this war is declared 'to be prosecuted not' in any spirit of oppression, or for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, or purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of those States, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union, with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired; and that as soon as these objects are accomplished the war ought to cease."

Can this be? Is it, in the nature of things, possible? In my opinion, clearly and emphatically, no. Which party, red-handed from the war, with the triumph upon ~~the~~ one hand and the bitterness of defeat rankling in the hearts of the other, will ever consent to return again to the hollow shams, tricks, deceptions, and compromises which have ultimated in this unholy war?

Will the Northern working man again permit the Southern slaveholder and the Breckinridge Democrat to strike hands in conspiracy against his rights? Will the Southern slaveholder again trust the Northern Democrat who betrayed him into his present deadly peril, by promises of Northern aid to put down any attempt at coercion, illustrated by the following precious morsel, cut from a South Carolina paper?

BELLEFONTE, Pa., November 24, 1860.

DEAR SIR: I understand that Colonel James S. Brisbin, of this place, has offered his services, with some "five hundred Wide-Awakes," to Governor Letcher, for the purpose of forcing the people of Virginia into measures, should they secede. I have expected this, and I now offer my services, with "one thousand men," who can be organized within ten days, to repel any attack that may be made by those men, or any other force from the Northern States.

I have been through the neighboring counties, and the young men of the Democratic party are anxious for them to make the first move. If they do so, I pledge you my word of honor as a gentleman and a soldier, they will never have to leave their own State to find an enemy.

If you accept my offer, you will please let me hear from you.

I am, truly,

Hon. HENRY A. WISE, Richmond, Va.

Will the Northern Democrats ever trust the Southern slaveholder who so ruthlessly broke up the party, and handed them over to the tender mercies of the Black Republican? The Democratic party was founded to defend the rights of man against the pretensions of property; and on this it grew into power.

Will the Democratic masses of the North consent to a reconstruction on the basis of the right of capital to own labor, or will they uphold a party existing exclusively as the defender and glorifier of the right of property in negroes?

How long will it be before the merchant and manufacturer or the farmer of the North can again give credit to those chivalric slaveholders who have repudiated their obligations,

and cheated their creditors of unknown millions? When, again, will the Northern mechanic expose himself to the dangers of a residence in a slaveholding community? When, and how, can these wounds be healed? Do the advocates of slavery mean, by the restoration of the old order of things, that Twiggs shall return upon the Army Register as brigadier general of the United States army? If so, is he to outrank the gallant Grant? Shall Mason again scowl in the Senate, and crack his whip over the representatives of the North; with Floyd, that thief, sneaking and mousing through every department of the Government for opportunity to betray it, professing obedience to its behests with his lips, while plotting its destruction—in a word, do they mean, with this expenditure of blood and treasure, simply to restore lost power to the leaders of a pro-slavery Democracy?

Sir, I have a higher hope. I believe that when we emerge from this war—decimated and impoverished though we may be—freedom will have a higher signification, and liberty will not be a word without meaning. From this time and forever you will ask in vain of the Northern man to submit to the contemptuous pretensions of the imperious Southerner to acknowledge the lordly rule of an aristocracy, based on the *ownership* of a slave, whose title-deed of nobility is dated from some noisome slave-pen, and attested by the sign-manual of the slave trader. No, sir, it cannot be; no possible consequences of this war can reconcile the people to return to the *wallow* of the past; they will never consent to allow slavery again to become a controlling power in the Government. Let us be honest with each other, and speak the thought that is in our hearts. Then, if gentlemen from Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, or Missouri, find it harder than they can bear; if they regard slavery as higher and holier than freedom; if they hold their rights to this property as more sacred than country; if they can offer on the altar of the Union life, fortune, and sacred honor, reserving slavery as beyond and above all these; then let them turn the bitterness of their hearts and the vials of their wrath against the bad men, who, urged by a worse system, have precipitated this conflict between freedom and slavery—and not against us, who but accept a stern necessity. Let us say to them, the opportunity to strike at this great evil of slavery, which our fathers longed and prayed for, is at length granted to the children, and we must not forego it, or God may abandon us.

“Once, to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side;  
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,  
Parts the goats upon the left hand and the sheep upon the right,  
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.”

Let them know plainly and honestly that, as we have in the past been true to the compromises of the Constitution in favor of slavery, we now feel ourselves absolved therefrom by the acts of the slaveholder.

And now that we are forced into a life and death struggle with this ugly fiend, and been drawn into the final contest with these traitors to the glorious heritage of the Revolution, we do regard the armed champions of slavery as foes to God and humanity, who must abide the fearful retribution of their crimes against both. They have whetted a sword against their own peace, and we must use it to their overthrow, and man's salvation; they have staked their lives against our lives, and we meet them with our lives in our hands; they have prepared a destruction against us, and we must return it upon them; they gloried in the belief that every Northern man's hand would be on his neighbor's throat through their machinations. So they must not whimper and cry if we arm such hands in the South as may rise to strike for the Union and freedom. Nor do they who are in the field against us complain of anything which we may propose to do. As men, they accept the brunt of the battle, the losses and privations of the war, the risks of insurrection, or our forced emancipation of their slaves. They accept all the danger and the death consequent on their course; and, so far as I have heard, laugh our threat to scorn, and defy us to do our best or worst.

Yet gentlemen on the other side of the House would have us believe, should we dare to touch this “sacred property,” the inevitable result will be the disbandment of our armies, and the withdrawal of the Democratic element of our country from the contest. Day by day we are gravely told that any departure from the original issues involved in the controversy are to lead to these direful results. The gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WRIGHT] has clearly shown his lack of faith in the conscience, virtue, and intelligence of our people, by declaring that to do justice to the laborers of the South, that to recognise the truth that “he who delves the soil has a just claim to its fruits,” that to act up to the Gospel maxim “the laborer is worthy of his hire,” that to pay a fair day's wages for a fair day's work to these dark children of toil, is to scatter this grand army of working men; that to inscribe freedom on the banner consecrated to freedom is to disband an army of



freemen; that to institute the marriage relation, (impossible in slavery,) to teach these four millions of "illiterate and half-barbarous people" the honored names of husband and wife, parent and child, is to cause the hundreds of thousands of loyal, loving husbands, noble fathers, and heroic sons to forget their oaths of service, and to throw down their arms in the face of insolent rebellion, trail the Stars and Stripes before the rattlesnake emblem of South Carolina; to allow their country to perish, and themselves to become the scorn of true womanhood the world over. Or, if we reach from our high estate of freedom and intelligence, and take these wronged men in our strong right hand, and teach them that they are men, or give them homes in this world, and a hope of life immortal in the next, then the gentleman from Pennsylvania ventures to say that the army of one hundred thousand men which Pennsylvania has put in the field would become less formidable "than the contemptible company of men that Falstaff was ashamed to march through Coventry to the battle of Shrewsbury." Or the gentleman from New York, conjuring up the horrible phantom with which so many children and Southern statesmen have been frightened at, says:

"It is my firm belief that if abolitionism should rule the day, this war would become one of extermination and death all over the country. That 'the blackness of darkness' would overshadow the land, and the sun of liberty go down in blood, thereby extinguishing the hopes of freemen for a republican Government, and obliterating all reasonable grounds for expecting the permanent sovereignty of the people."

Now, Mr. Chairman, I for one do not believe any such thing. I have lived close to the people of my country, and I believe that the great American people, Democrat and Republican, "love freedom more than slavery, free institutions more than slave institutions," the old starry flag always and forever above the broad-striped rag that now insults the manhood and brings the blush of shame to the womanhood of the nation. Their logic is short and terribly direct. "Slavery is at war with us, and slavery *must* die." The death-knell of slavery was in the echoes of the first gun at Sumter. Slavery pointed that gun, and fired it against freedom and our flag. Then the sons of freedom and the lovers of that flag rose *en masse* as a man; the men of the North roused to the rescue; instinctively the people sought out their old leaders and *made them* do reverence to the old banner of the Revolution, and the Stars and Stripes floated from every house. Demagogues who had cheated the masses, in fear and trembling at the terrific outburst of patriotic indignation, ran to and fro to borrow the flag they had laughed at, and their white lips did unusual reverence to the Union they had conspired against. This outburst of patriotism served for a time to hush the treason that, with blatant threat, promised to carry Pennsylvania with the Southern Confederacy. The cry went forth that the Capitol was endangered, and the axe was dropped in its cut, the iron in the fire, the shuttle half across the the woof, the plough in the furrow, the day-book left unbalanced, as the woodman, smith, and weaver, the farmer, clerk, and lawyer, the tired son of toil, the idle child of luxury, the schoolmaster and his scholar, the learned judge, preachers, and dignitaries, high and low—none too high, none too low—hurried to respond to the insult and the challenge. And here we stand to-day, face to face, with the fell spirit that pulled down that flag amid fire and blood, which drove the brave Anderson and the gallant and true Doubleday and Foster from the walls of Sumter. That story revealed to an astonished world the inherent loyalty of our people to the spirit of the institutions transmitted from their fathers. Would it not be well for gentlemen to take heed in the dangerous game they are playing, by striving to block the way to victory, in withholding supplies, in paralyzing the loyal endeavors of the true-hearted by teaching this miserable heresy of a conditional loyalty?

But should these teachers of half truths, of half-way loyalty to our flag and country, aided by pro-slavery army officers, succeed in arraying this army against such policy as may be deemed necessary to the salvation of the country, well, what then? Will the nation die because these false sons fail it in its hour of need? Are the people to be subdued by a treason not altogether unanticipated? Shall liberty return to heaven, from whence it came, and shall free institutions perish on earth because Democracy still chooses to follow the lead of the false-hearted Breckinridge? No, sir; chafing and impatient, fierce and almost bloodthirsty, stands this nation, looking with damnation on each doubter, and bitter contempt on every feebleness; and should our present great preparation fail us utterly, and our commanders prove incompetent or disloyal, still would I know that the Lord liveth, and these United States are to endure forever.









WERT  
BOOKBINDING  
Grantville, Pa.  
Jan.-Feb. 1988  
We're Out of Bounds



